

**English
Catholic**



**History
Association**

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NEWSLETTER

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Membership of the English Catholic History Association

is open to all who are interested in furthering its aims.

Annual membership £11 with reductions for additional members at same address and students under 25

Membership forms and further details are available from:

The Secretary or Treasurer, addresses on page 3,
or on the website - <http://echa.org.uk/>

Feedback and comments are **always** welcome. Please send them to Mr William King at the address on page 3.

Articles for publication are also welcome. Please send them by email to the Editor at the address on page 3 and, if possible, saved with file extension of .doc in Word, and photos in .jpg format.

Patrons: Rt. Revd. Mark Davis, Bishop of Shrewsbury
Rt. Rev. Dom Geoffrey Scott, OSB, MA, PhD, FSA, FRHist S
Lord Clifford of Chudleigh

COMMITTEE:

Chairman: Tim Guile, Associate Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. Email: chairman.echa@yahoo.com

Treasurer & Membership Secretary & Regional Co-ordinator for the dioceses of Birmingham and Shrewsbury: Mr Vincent Burke, 16 Brandhall Court, Wolverhampton Road, Oldbury B68 8DE

General Secretary (for all general enquiries): Mr William King, Email: sec.echa@yahoo.com

Programme Co-ordinator and Regional Co-ordinator for the dioceses of Southwark, Arundel & Brighton, Brentwood and East Anglia: Mr Bernard Polack, 4 Woodstock Grove, Farncombe, Godalming, GU7 2AX.

Newsletter Editor: Mrs Margaret Turnham
Email: newsletter.echa@yahoo.com

Website Administrator: Mrs Lynne Hunter
Johnston. Email: englishcatholichistory@gmail.com

Regional Co-ordinator for the dioceses of Northampton & Nottinghamshire: Mrs Sheila Mawhood, 21 The Retreat, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire, HP27 0JG.

Regional Co-ordinator for the diocese of Westminster: Mr Nigel Parker, 17 Salcombe Gardens, Clapham Common North Side, LONDON, SW4 9RY.

Committee members (with those above): Andrew Fox, Angie Hodges, Robert Tickle

Further REGIONAL CO-ORDINATORS

Regional Co-ordinator for the dioceses of Middlesbrough, Leeds and Hexham & Newcastle: Mrs Lalage Robson, Dunelm, Black Dyke Lane, Upper Poppleton, York, YO62 6PT.

Regional Co-ordinator for the dioceses of Lancaster, Salford, Liverpool & Hallam: Mr Anthony Kloszek, 189 Smedley Road, Cheetham Hill, M, M8 0RU.

Regional Co-ordinator for Kent (part of Southwark diocese): Mr Christopher Bull, 48 Reed Avenue, Canterbury, CT1 1ES.

Regional Co-Ordinator for the dioceses of Clifton and Plymouth:
Vacant

Regional Co-ordinator for Wales: Major Tristan Griffin, 4 Cwmavon Road, Bleanavon, NP4 9LD

Website: www.echa.org.uk

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the ECHA Newsletter's 100th edition! The Newsletter has been going for many years and previous editions are available online. <https://echa.org.uk/newsletters/>. Margaret Turnham has been looking after this newsletter as editor since last year.

We have had excellent online speakers this year and have a busy programme booked for the rest of the year. Last year, our AGM was at the church of the Immaculate Conception, Farm St, Mayfair. Joanna Bogle talked to us about the life of Caroline Chisholm who did pioneering work in Australia and is well known there among Australian Catholics. This year, our AGM will be held in November at Our Lady of the Assumption and St Gregory, Warwick St, London **W1B 5LZ** <https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/warwickstreet/> Everyone is warmly welcome.

Tim Guile
Chairman ECHA

NOTES AND NOTICES

The Centenary edition of the Newsletter provides a welcome opportunity to look at how the work of the ECHA has developed since its foundation in 1991, and under the guidance of its committee how we hope it will thrive in the future.

Our new Patron

We are very pleased to welcome the Bishop of Shrewsbury, the Rt Rev. Mark Davis as Episcopal patron of the Association.

In February of this year, Bishop Mark Davies of Shrewsbury agreed to become the episcopal patron of the English Catholic History Association. He has kindly agreed to foster the relationship between the Association and the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales. Whilst we are not a devotional organisation, our activities in promoting Catholic history and visits to locations connected to the Catholic faith, mean that ECHA does seek to engage with the diocesan structure and organises its network of regional co-ordinators accordingly. The vast majority of our members and friends have a local diocesan bishop who belongs to the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Having someone who can link us more closely to that organisation will be a great help in making us more widely known. We are therefore very pleased that Bishop Mark has agreed to serve alongside Dom Geoffrey Scott OSB and Lord Clifford of Chudleigh as a Patron of the Association.

The Rt Rev Mark Davies serves as the 11th Bishop of Shrewsbury and is responsible for over 170,000 Catholic faithful in Shropshire, Cheshire and parts of Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Derbyshire. He was born in Manchester on 12th May 1959 and baptised at St Richard's Church, Longsight. After completing his schooling in Manchester and Stockport he trained for the priesthood at Ushaw College and was ordained in 1984. He served as a priest of the Diocese of Salford and became Vicar General of that diocese in 2003. The then Monsignor Davies was appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Shrewsbury by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009. He was ordained as Bishop at St Anthony's Church, Wythenshawe on 22nd February 2010. On 1st October 2010 he succeeded Bishop Brian Noble as Bishop of Shrewsbury.

Face to face at last – Restoring Site Visits

When the ECHA (or English Catholic History Group as it was known then) was formed in 1991, there was no such thing as Zoom. All our meetings were face to face. When Covid struck, however, we turned to on-screen talks and they have been amazingly successful, bringing us a whole new audience. We are now booked up with speakers into 2025. We are determined, however, to go back to holding events where we can visit places and meet each other, and earlier this year, some of us formed a sub-committee to try to bring this about.

This has resulted in our proposed visit to Holywell in Flintshire which is being organised by our new, enthusiastic secretary, William King. It is to take place on Saturday 25th May. Tours have been arranged at the National Shrine and St Winefride's Catholic Church, a fine Grecian style building of 1832.

Further visits are being considered. The Harvington History Festival takes place 24th-28th July, and we thought it would be great for people to meet up with friends they haven't seen since pre-Covid by attending this together on Sunday 28th July. Another possible visit in September 2024 could be to Ely Cathedral and St Etheldreda's Catholic Church in Ely, and to Stonor Park in 2025.

As you will have seen previously in the newsletter, our new patron is Bishop Mark Davies of Shrewsbury. His Cathedral is located in Shrewsbury, the historic county town of Shropshire. There are many sites of Catholic interest in the town, including the Cathedral Church of Our Lady Help of Christians and St Peter of Alcantara, a Pugin design dating from 1856. It is hoped that ECHA will descend on Shrewsbury during 2025 to explore this heritage further and to meet Bishop Mark Davies.

Please do contact William King on sec.echa@yahoo.com with your ideas for future ECHA outings and events.

Angie Hodges

Website Development

We live in an era where seemingly almost anything can be done online. Our Association is no stranger to the internet and has expanded the amount of information that it offers there considerably over the last few years. One thing that we have not done yet is to allow our many online friends to join us as paid-up members. As many of us either need to dust off our chequebooks before use, or don't own one at all, this may present a barrier for some people who wish to support our work.

A sub-group of committee members has now come together to see how we can provide a smoother process for bringing new members into the ECHA family. We know that thousands of people view our pages online but only a very small proportion of those individuals support us financially. We have received several enquiries this year asking how people can make payments to ECHA online. We have engaged the services of a web developer, George English, to add e-commerce functions to our well used website. This will allow for donations and membership subscriptions to be sent to us quickly and in a format which is increasingly being used for transactions in many areas of life. There would be no ECHA without you, our members and, in order to continue to promote and share the Catholic history of England and Wales, we must be in a position to attract new supporters. Our commitment to historical research and discovery must go hand in hand with using modern technology to promote ourselves as a charity. Many of you will be reading this very article online or may have first heard about us when you attended an online lecture. Historical knowledge can be absorbed and expanded online just as it can be in an archive or ancient church.

Speaking for myself, there are few greater joys than wandering around the Church History section of a second-hand bookshop. But as an organisation built around engaging with others to fulfil our aims, an updated website will help to provide a complimentary way of sharing more widely a story of faith and heritage that you the reader know to be incredible.

William King, Secretary

Our Social Media Presence

We have a website which is currently being overhauled and revamped to suit a more modern age. It has over a thousand followers now which we hope to grow. Our Face Book group has over four thousand members and is regularly updated. We have an X (formerly Twitter) page and we are on Apple Podcasts and YouTube. Feel free to take a look at these social media outlets if you haven't already done so.

Tim Guile, Chairman

The Timeline Project

The idea of a Timeline project was born out of a project by our sister group in Australia, charting their Catholic history <https://australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au/history-resources/timeline-of-australian-catholic-history>

Obviously, our history covers a much longer period of time so it will appear on the website a bit at a time as it progresses. It starts in AD313 when Christianity became an official religion of the Roman Empire and ends in 2010 when Pope Benedict XVI visited the UK. It is divided into five sections: The Emergence of the Early Medieval Church (up to 1066); the Medieval Church (1066-1532) The Reformation (1532-1558) Penal Times (1588-1829) The Confident Church (1829-2010). Each section will have an introductory article and shorter in-depth articles on aspects of special interest. There will also be a resources section and I am hoping to include an illustrated simplified timeline for children.

My aim for the Timeline is to produce a resource that will interest people at all levels, from those with no knowledge of our history to students of history looking for initial information about the part Catholicism has played in British history.

The Timeline is a lot of work and if you would like to share the burden please contact me at newsletter.echa@yahoo.com with details of the area you are interested in or something you are passionate about, which you feel would make a good in-depth study. The introductory articles will be around 5000 words and the more in-depth studies around 3000 words plus footnotes and bibliography. I will put together a style guide for people to follow and give as much assistance to people as they need. To whet your appetite, I already have an article on Thomas More, an article on Medieval church architecture has been commissioned and the introductory articles for the first two periods are underway. Finally, I hope that the Timeline will become more interactive so people can add their own diocesan or parish histories to it.

As a Church Historian, I am passionate about the genesis of the Timeline because I feel our Catholic history is often restricted in people's minds to the period of the Reformation. For example, we need to own the pre-Reformation Church and realise how much Catholics have contributed to the causes of Justice and Peace in the late C20th. I hope that when it starts appearing on the Website you will share in my passion.

Dr Margaret Turnham

What else do we do?

Members of the ECHA are able to use their interest in Catholic history not only to extend their own knowledge, or help preserve our history but also to make new discoveries or solve a mystery. In this edition Sheila Mawhood talks about her interest in Catholic history and the different roles she has undertaken to further the work of the Association

Sheila Mawhood and the ECHA

I remember the first ECHA newsletter that came in the post. Not the content unfortunately but who would not be struck by the “road signage” black and yellow livery, never mind the coat of arms or is it our logo on the cover? It certainly identifies us. This was in the late 1990s and I had recently joined the association following a mailshot organised by Toni Eccles, one of the founders of the Association. This couldn't have come at a better time as I had recently been asked by my PP at St Augustine's in High Wycombe to write a history of our parish. And I was appallingly ignorant of ENGLISH Catholic history. A lot of you don't know that I am Australian. The nuns at our convent school in Sydney would have tried to instill some notable English Catholic history into our heads but I'm ashamed to say they failed.

Would you believe that I soon ended up on the ECHA committee! I was late to that first committee meeting. The Chairman at the time was Fr Brian Doolan. And he was PP at a number of scattered small parishes near Banbury, and had been Administrator at St Chad's in Birmingham. He lived at Lower Brailes, a beautiful hamlet and the chapel at his church blew me away. It was quite old but stunningly simple and it had survived The Reformation unscathed.

The matter being discussed when I did arrive was being presented by Lynne Hunter Johnson and concerned setting up a thing called a website. O yes. What a great idea! I admit that I came in on this topic with all guns blazing. A brilliant idea. I imagine that the others were taken aback. But look. We still have Lynne maintaining our current website. We also still have Angie, Vincent and Bernard on the committee. Bernard and his late wife Ursula spent many years coordinating our ECHA visits to places all over England. He currently is our vice chairman as well. Angie took over the secretarial role soon after and Vincent remains our Treasurer and also is the membership secretary. I am a committee member but am also the regional coordinator for Northampton and Nottingham dioceses.

Toni Eccles had an amazing ability to get people on board. And before long I was the editor of the ECHA newsletter. Angie had been the previous editor but she needed help. This was a terrifying job for me but. I was determined to make a go of it. Everyone on the committee gave me material to include. Then stuff started coming in from other coordinators and members. I think I was your editor for about 8 years. The associated admin was a bit of a burden though. So, copying Toni's methods, I Shanghai'd an unsuspecting friend (another member called Brian) to be my official envelope stuffer and stamp put-er-on. He'd depart my place with a post office Santa sack and was to be seen stuffing envelopes into red mailboxes by the roadside in Hughenden Valley. So now you know my story.

These days we have a much larger committee. The content of your newsletter is varied and full of all manner of stories of our shared Catholic past. Margaret Turnham is our current editor and she's doing a magnificent job. It's great to have overseas members and we even have a growing relationship with my native home. I hope that the Brigidine nuns can now be content that I'm paying attention.

Sheila Mawhood

ARTICLES

Journey or Destination: Christian Pilgrimage Tradition in England and Wales

Pilgrimage, for Christians in the British Isles, is an ancient and deep-rooted experience which links us with our ancestors in centuries gone by. One question that is often asked in relation to this experience is: which is more important, the journey or the destination or, as some would say, is it both combined? Britain is steeped in Christian history with its culture, heritage, language and architecture rooted in Christian tradition.

Holy places from long ago may still resonate with travellers, pilgrims and visitors to England and Wales today. Medieval English and Welsh people were strongly attached to veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints and they were known to go on pilgrimages both within the country and abroad. The tradition of the cult of the saints and pilgrimage to holy places is historically evidenced and was largely suppressed at the time of the English Reformation in the sixteenth century.

This tradition of pilgrimage has been revived in modern times and is now part of the rich tapestry of our history, archaeology, faith and heritage. Alongside those who would identify with the Christian community at large, lots of people have no religious beliefs at all and may indeed be antagonistic to organised religion. However, many of them may have an ambivalent attitude to places, people and events with connotations of religion, faith, spirituality or belief. They clearly 'mean something' and can engender enquiry or even fascination. The influence of the church may have waned substantially in Britain and other countries in western Europe but pilgrimage is still popular with growing numbers of people.

The words 'pilgrim' and 'pilgrimage' come from the Latin *perigrinus* and *perigrinatus* denoting a stranger. This must come from the fact that strangers might travel through a neighbourhood on their way to a

destination. We get the word 'saunter' from the French "Sant Terre" or Holy land indicating that pilgrims were travelling to the holy places of present-day Israel. The verb to canter comes from Canterbury as pilgrims in medieval Britain might travel on horseback.

The British Insular Christians, sometimes denoted as 'Celtic Christians' by some observers, were familiar with priests and monks travelling to a holy place, often on the fringes of these islands, to have a spiritual experience. These experiences may have been connected to penitential rites and may also have been by way of atonement for perceived sins. Iona is one famous example of such a holy place off the coast, but there were many more in Scotland, Ireland and Wales during this time.

In the medieval period it was not so much the journey which was important, though hardships and deprivations along the way were generally seen as a component part of the spiritual experience. One had to give something up to get something back. Giving up home comforts for a time was a way of advancing one's spiritual pilgrimage and a way of showing one's dedication to God and to his holy saints and martyrs. At first, local shrines in one's own immediate neighbourhood did not count as a pilgrimage but as time went on these were also recognised as a pilgrimage type experience.

The experience of pilgrimage was a redemptive one involving being shriven by a priest and undergoing various types of penance such as giving something up or doing spiritual or physical activities. The Christian tradition of Lent (originally meaning a time of the lengthening days) leading up to the most important festival of Easter, is an echo of this ancient tradition. The spring was the traditional time of year for pilgrimages to begin as roads and streams might be more easily navigable. As Chaucer notes in his prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, "Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote, The droghte of March hath perced to the roote."¹ He goes on to say. "Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages."

¹ Chaucer, J, *The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*

A central part of indigenous Catholicism in England or Wales was the Marian cult. The English towns and villages most noted for medieval devotion to Mary in Britain were: Walsingham in Norfolk, the primary British shrine of Mary and known across Europe; Coventry; Doncaster; Ely; Evesham; Glastonbury; Ipswich; Lincoln; Pontefract; Willesden and Worcester. Many abbeys and priories were dedicated to Mary, especially the Cistercian and Carmelite ones. Yet very many more places could be added to the list as devotion to Mary was common; most people could not travel far and needed a local place to visit on pilgrimage.

A twelfth century sermon from Santiago de Compostela for the feast of St James refers to remission of sins and redemption for the pilgrim who travels there from faraway places. It was seen as healing and medicine for the soul. Suffering might be involved but it was tough love as the pilgrim would be healed either physically or spiritually. By the fourteenth century, bishops were sending parishioners to local shrines and holy wells to be healed of maladies, real or imagined. In 1180 the shrine of St Frideswide in Oxford saw one hundred and eighty pilgrims visit the shrine on one day alone. The Crusades to the Holy Land gave some people a taste for foreign travel and a wish to visit shrines and holy places abroad including the Holy Land. The confirmation by Rome of Plenary Indulgences given to pilgrims who visited these holy places was rocket fuel for the tradition of pilgrimage, and confirmed priests and bishops in their view that parishioners should attempt to make a pilgrimage when time and circumstances allowed.

Canterbury was a major destination for pilgrims in the medieval period. The shrine of St Thomas of Canterbury was the big draw for pilgrims and it was carefully managed by the monks. Pilgrims frequently gave gifts to the monks, especially if they felt they had been helped or healed by the process. The architecture of major churches, monasteries and cathedrals was often a physical manifestation of the pilgrims' generosity and the monks' business acumen.

Walsingham was the premier Marian shrine. Its fame spread throughout Europe and people went there on pilgrimage from far afield. Pilgrims stopped then as now, at the Slipper Chapel and often walked barefoot on the Holy Mile into Little Walsingham where they would visit the Holy House at Walsingham Priory.



Slipper Chapel, Walsingham
(Ashley Dace - Wikimedia Commons)

Stepping into this liminal world of holiness was the aim of most visitors to the shrine. Even royalty paid visits, including Henry VIII. There, they would gaze upon the small, wooden statue of Our Lady bedecked and dressed in finery for the benefit of pilgrims. Erasmus, the Dutch scholar, visited Walsingham in 1513 and was impressed by the splendour of the Shrine. He wrote: 'There is a small chapel, which admits by a small narrow little door, on either side, those who come to salute our Layde ; the light is feeble, in fact scarcely any, excepting from wax candles. A most delightful fragrance gladdens one's nose.' Of the statue in the chapel, he said: 'When you look in you would say it is the abode of saints, so brilliantly does it shine with gems, gold and silver ... Our Lady stands in the dark at the right side of the altar ... a little image, remarkable neither for its size, material or workmanship.' Although the image was reported to have been destroyed in a fire in 1538, there is no eyewitness

account. Some believe that this image of Our Lady is now in the V&A Museum today and is known as the Langham Madonna.

Glastonbury was another major pilgrimage destination with its associations with Joseph of Arimathea.

“And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon England’s mountains green:
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On England’s pleasant pastures seen!”²

wrote William Blake. He went on to ask, “and was Jerusalem builded here?” Glastonbury was a Marian shrine and it attracted pilgrims from far and wide.

Some English pilgrims travelled abroad on journeys to European holy places. Marjorie Kemp (1373-1438) travelled from her home in Kings Lynn in Norfolk to the far distant Holy Land, to Rome and to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain. Her journey to Spain was from Bristol to La Corunna but it was the destination which mattered, not the means of getting there. She travelled on her journeys by whatever means of transport that was available at the time just as Chaucer’s imaginary pilgrims had also done. It certainly wasn’t a walking holiday. Whilst in Rome she visited many churches to savour the spiritual benefits of this amazing pilgrimage experience.

Wales also had several places of pilgrimage in the medieval period. Some of these were holy wells such as Holywell in north Wales which is, in fact, the oldest continuously visited holy place in the country. Even the Henrician reforms of the 1530s failed to stop people visiting its healing waters and bathing in the pool there. Winifred, sometimes written as Winefride or Gwenffrewi in Welsh, was a seventh century Welsh martyr associated with Gwytherin and is remembered at Holywell, Flintshire. She was said to have been the daughter of a local chief and niece of St Bueno. Her family connections mean she is sometimes called a princess.

² Blake, W, Jerusalem

Winefride was supposedly pursued by a suitor named Caradoc, but she told him she had decided to become a nun rather than give in to his advances, or so the story goes. Caradoc was said to have become angry and frustrated and decided to cut off Winefride's head with his sword. Versions of the story differ, but one popular version is that her head rolled down the hill, and where it came to rest a spring gushed forth from the ground. This spring and the well that later developed around it and were thought by some pilgrims to have healing powers.

Fortunately, according to one version of the legend, Winefride's uncle, Bueno, was passing, and managed to heal her and restore her to health. He then called on the almighty to punish her assailant, Caradoc, who was promptly struck dead on the spot, and the ground conveniently opened up to swallow him. Bueno then sat upon a stone and vowed that if anyone should stand or sit on that spot and three times ask God for help in Winefride's name, that help would be granted.

The stone upon which he made this vow is called Bueno's Stone and lies in the outer pool of the holy well. As for Winefride, she carried out her wish to become a nun at Gwytherin in Denbighshire and later rose to be abbess of that convent. She died around 660 AD and was buried at her abbey. From the time of her death Winefride was venerated, and the holy well became a place of pilgrimage.

In 1138 her bones were carried with great ceremony to Shrewsbury Abbey, where her shrine became an extremely popular destination for pilgrims throughout the Middle Ages. It is thought that St Winefride's Well has been a destination for pilgrims for over a thousand years, longer than most other Christian sites in the British Isles. This long history as a place of pilgrimage has led Holywell to become known as the Lourdes of Wales. The well is contained within a beautiful early sixteenth-century Gothic building.



St Winefride's Well, Flintshire, Wales

(Richard Croft -Wikimedia Commons)

This beautiful structure has a bathing pool within a star-shaped inner chamber, joined to a more modern rectangular bathing pool for pilgrims. In the inner pool is St Bueno's Stone, taken from the nearby streambed. The spectacular vaulted canopy over the pool was constructed on the orders of Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, and carries elaborate carvings of Tudor family symbols. There are carvings representing St Winifred in several places and one large carving is set on the ceiling, showing the saint with a staff and a crown upon her head.

Pilgrimages must have begun soon after her death but the earliest written records of pilgrimages date to the twelfth century, when pilgrims claimed healing from illness after bathing in the waters of the well. Among the treasures on display in the museum are wooden crutches thrown aside by pilgrims after healing. Most visitors focus on the holy well and shrine, but here is also a late fifteenth-century chapel. Thomas Pennant (1726-98) the multitalented naturalist, antiquity, traveller and writer, wrote about the holy well in 1776.

“The resort of pilgrims of late years to these Fontanalia has considerably decreased; the greatest number are from Lancashire. In the summer still a few are to be seen in the water in deep devotion up to their chins for hours, sending up their prayers, or performing a number of evolutions round the polygonal well; or threading the arch between well and well a prescribed number of times. Few people of rank at present honour the fountain with their presence.”³

The holy well is still very much a place of pilgrimage with the local sign informing visitors that it is the Lourdes of Wales. St Winefride’s Day is today celebrated on the third of November. A second festival is celebrated at Holywell on June 22nd which commemorates the day on which her head was said to have been removed and replaced.

Pen Rhys was a shrine of Our Lady which is twenty-one miles north of Llandaff cathedral in Cardiff. The shrine was destroyed on Henry VIII’s orders, but today it is still visited by pilgrims on the modern Penrhys Way pilgrimage trail. A modern catholic shrine is Our Lady of the Taper in Cardigan which is a re-founding of a medieval foundation. A recent Anglican shrine is at St Peter’s church Pwllheli on the Llyn Peninsula. There is a statue of Mair Forwyn y Mor in the church which is venerated by local Anglicans and is a recreation of a medieval shrine. The statue is a modern carved one but is very striking.

Pilgrimages on the continent such as Lourdes, which I visited with my diocese at the age of eleven and again with teenagers aged seventeen, was a destination rather than a spiritual journey. Trips to such places as Fatima would be much the same in that it is about the spiritual experience when one arrives. However, the Camino to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain has, since the 1970s, become firmly established as a journey, possibly a journey of self-discovery which folk

³ Pennant, History of the Parishes of Whiteford and Holywell, 1796.

<https://wellhopper.wales/2012/06/22/st-winefrides-well-holywell/>

undertake largely on foot. For the medieval pilgrim, the journey, of course, was not seen as a real focus of the experience.

The Walsingham pilgrimage revival began in the late nineteenth century, with the first modern pilgrimage taking place on the twentieth of August 1897 with the visit of the Catholic Guild of Our Lady of Ransom to the Slipper Chapel, a mile outside the village in Houghton St Giles. Visits to the Slipper Chapel became more frequent, and as the years passed devotion and the number of pilgrimages increased. In 1921 the Anglican priest, Fr Alfred Hope Patten was appointed vicar of Walsingham. He was determined to re-establish Walsingham as a shrine to Our Lady and set up a statue of her in the parish church of St Mary. By the early 1930s, Fr Patten had built a new Anglican shrine containing a modern Holy House, just outside the Priory walls. Today, Walsingham is one of the most significant spiritual places in the country, visited each year by around 350,000 pilgrims of all ages and backgrounds. On 19th August 1934, Cardinal Bourne and Bishop Lawrence Youens led the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, together with ten thousand pilgrims to the Slipper Chapel. At this pilgrimage, the Slipper Chapel was declared to be the National Shrine of Our Lady for Catholics in England. In 1948 Student Cross began a tradition that continues today. Each year Pilgrim Cross as it's now known, still walk to the Shrine during Holy Week.

In the twenty-first century, pilgrimage is for anyone, anywhere. Hiking for health and a willingness to experience nature or spirituality has made a resurgence. New pilgrim trails are appearing across the country. Camino of Ireland and Wales, Penrhys Pilgrimage Way, Walsingham Way, Finchale Camino Ingles, The Old Way from Southampton to Canterbury, St Hilda's Way. Saints Way in Cornwall, North Wales Pilgrims Way (Camino Cymru) are just a few examples. I completed the Student Cross Pilgrimage to Walsingham in my twenties walking with others of my own age we trudged a hundred miles across East Anglia carrying the three-metre oak cross and singing heartily. On the way we had 'Stations' each day which were a short reflection and prayer to focus us on our task. For us, the journey on foot was an integral part of the pilgrimage experience. On one of these pilgrimages, we were filmed by the BBC for a TV programme on pilgrimage.

One is never truly alone on a pilgrim way. Even on remote stretches of trail when one doesn't see another soul, there's always the sense that so many others have walked the same route before you, sometimes for hundreds of years. On a popular pilgrim route you may be travelling in a group where you can laugh, sing and get to know fellow pilgrims. Everyone has their own unique experience of a pilgrim walk. The beauty of walking, and of walking an established route like a pilgrim way or the Camino, is that it gives you the time and space away from the demands of daily life to reconnect with the world around you.

Travelling on foot is one of the best ways to absorb the sights, sounds, and smells of the places you pass. Whether it's the sweet scent of the wildflowers or the lingering smell of the cowpat you didn't quite manage to avoid, you'll feel more in touch with the natural world than perhaps you ever have. When all you must do that day is to put one foot in front of the other, you'll also find that the rhythm of walking calms your mind and aids reflection and so it becomes a spiritual experience. No matter how long or short your chosen pilgrimage is, there's always a fantastic sense of achievement on reaching your goal and the end of your journey.

TJ Guile

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- Webb, B, Pilgrimage in Medieval England, Hambledon and London, London 2000

Not History – But It Is



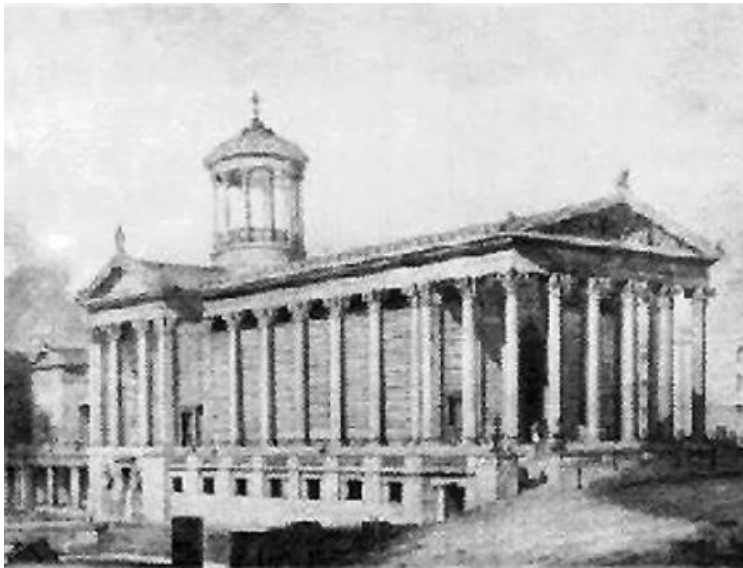
The old and the new

2022 © picture composite Peter J Harrison

Generations of Catholics in Bristol in the residential area of Clifton had the ambition to build a great church in which they could worship and upon which to build their Christian community. The Bristol population being largely Protestant, Roman Catholics were thin on the ground and tended to be from the poorer working class. By the time the *Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829*, the Catholics in Bristol had established several local places of worship, some of them in private houses or public houses, and a site for a new church was acquired in the 1830s by the discreet purchase through a third party, of site known as ‘Stoney Fields’ in what is now Park Place, Clifton. This deception was necessary to minimise the risk of local protest, as the provisions of the earlier *Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1791* had not yet been fully established in practice. In 1834, the local priest Father Edgeworth laid the foundation stone of

a chapel and the crypt of what was intended to become the ProCathedral Church. But the weight of stone meant the building foundations repeatedly gave way. Father Edgeworth fled to Antwerp as a bankrupt. H E Goodridge's design for that first building was ambitious.

It seems, if it had been completed, it would have been one of the most significant and largest Georgian Palladian buildings of its time. The Stoney Fields site remained derelict and ruined for some years and the title deeds held by the Newport Bank.

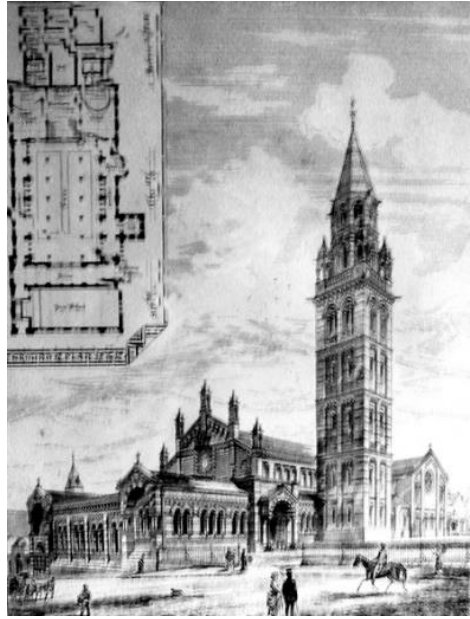


First design - by Henry Goodridge 1834

1970 © Peter J Harrison, courtesy Clifton Diocesan Trustees

**Second design - by James
Hansom 1843**

1973 © Peter J Harrison
courtesy Clifton Diocesan Trustees



Bishop William Ullathorne was appointed as the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District in 1846. He recalled later:

‘My earnest desire was to build a new church in Bristol which might serve as a cathedral...by repurchasing the ruin of the great church begun by Father Edgeworth at Clifton... I sent for Mr. Hansom; told him he must put his architectural reputation into his pocket, and simply follow my directions... to put in two rows of columns, not of stone... but of wood, to be made stouter to the eye by casings ... and we must run two beams the whole length upon the crown of the vaulting, like the keels of two ships, joint the separate pieces together upon the supporting sub-walls... and then step the wooden pillars upon them.... We thus succeeded at a small cost in converting the ruin into the present cathedral of Clifton...⁴

⁴ © 1941 Burns Oates – ‘From Cabin Boy to Archbishop – The autobiography of Archbishop Ullathorne’ pp 239 f f

So it was that the ProCathedral Church was opened by Bishop Ullathorne on the 21 September 1848.



ProCathedral Church of the Holy Apostles

1970 © Peter J Harrison

The Clifton Mission

The Catholic community grew steadily in the years that followed. After the World Wars and by the 1950s, the ProCathedral parishioners had saved about £250,000 for the ProCathedral Restoration Fund which was now urgent.

In 1964, there was a substantial Catholic community, with Sunday Mass being celebrated at 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 a.m., and after 1965 Mass was also celebrated on Sunday evenings at 6 and 8pm. There were five religious communities living in the parish working with two schools, a hospital and two residential homes for the elderly. I estimate the Mass count must have been more than 2,000 each Sunday.

Just before closure, civil engineers were called in to survey the site, but it was reported that they could not recommend the integrity of the ground on which the ProCathedral stood. That information presented the then Bishop of Clifton, Dr Joseph Rudderham, and Monsignor Canon Thomas J Hughes, the parish priest, with a serious problem. Some form of renovation was urgently required, but the money raised was inadequate, and now, with the engineer's damning report about the site, perched as it was above the edge of a steep drop onto Jacob Wells Road, the question whether to restore the old building or build a new church was a weighty one. In 1967 an anonymous group of business people offered to contribute £400,000 for a new building on condition that a new site was to be found [later increased to £450,00]. The donors had a vision of a place of worship and a monument to Almighty God. So, the design and construction of a new Cathedral was born.

Shaping a Cathedral for the Twentieth Century

The Percy Thomas Partnership was appointed as architects for the new project. The team was led by Frederick Jennett CBE Dip Arch FBA MTP and Ronald Weeks ARIBA Dipl Arch as Design Architect, assisted by architect Antoni Peremba FRIBA. Assisted by the Liturgical Briefing Committee, consisting of experienced parish priests and several lay experts in architecture and liturgy, the design of the new Cathedral Church began to emerge.

The Design Approach

The bishops attending the Second Council of the Vatican had been meeting in Rome between 1962-1965, working on the renewal of the church for the modern age. Its first publication: *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* was published on 4 December 1963.⁵ This document set the strategy for the renewal of the liturgy and the changes in the conduct of the church's public worship. The impact on the design of the Cathedral at Clifton would prove to be significant. The Historic England

⁵ *Vatican II Sacrosanctum Concilium* 4 December 1963 – Vatican Council II: Volume 1 The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents © Reverend Austin Flannery OP

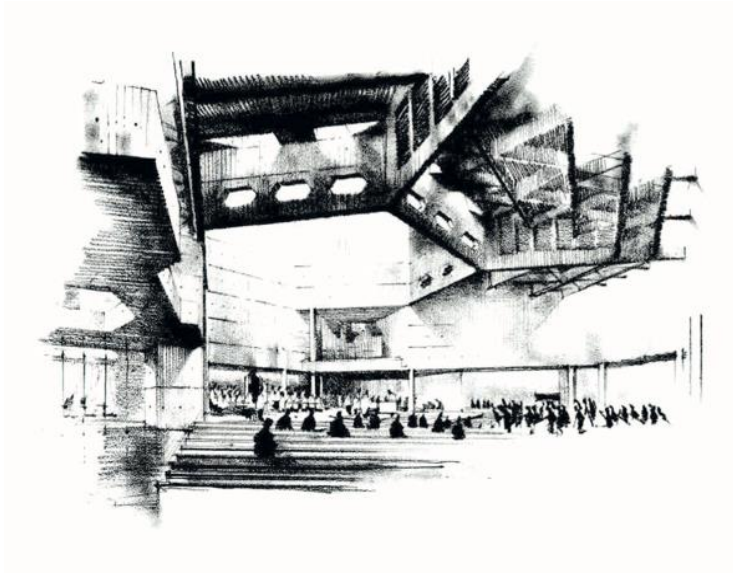
listing says: ‘Clifton is often described as being the first cathedral in the world to accord completely with the liturgical guidelines issued by the Vatican in November 1963’.⁶ The discussions between the design team of architects and the Liturgical Briefing Committee at Clifton continued throughout the time the Cathedral was being designed and built, and beyond. Sitting in on many of these sessions, I found it fascinating just to listen and watch. The questions from Ronald Weeks were fundamental. As Ronald Weeks himself reported in the *Evening Post* in December 1968:

‘It’s surprising how much people take for granted. Not being Catholics, we could ask all sorts of questions which appeared naïve – like – “What is an altar”, in which one would get conflicting answers... each question would lead to a discussion which in turn helped to banish pre-conceived notions so we could plan right from scratch.’⁷

I think some priests found this quite exhausting. I was a little luckier, I had unlike my fellow clergy at that time, been studying liturgy for 4 years while at the Pontifical English College, Lisbon. Ronald Weeks was also familiar with the impact of the liturgical reform on the continent of Europe, where it was more advanced than in this country. There were many questions – do the hard wooden rows of long pews inhibit the ‘full and active participation of the faithful’ in the liturgy? Was the concept of a long nave with the Altar at the end creating a passive response and non-involved attitude by the people in what was happening, when in contrast, the foremost objective of *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* was to create full and active participation by all those present? The Mass was not to be just the action that the priest did, with the people merely being present, for the Church sees the celebration of the Eucharist as the action of Christ involving the whole body of Christ in the community in this age and looking towards in worship and in expectation of the return of Christ at the end of time.

⁶ *Building*, 15 June 1973, p.73

⁷ *Evening Post* 15 December 1968 interview reported by Roger Bennet



An interior sketch 1968 before construction by architect Ronald Weeks – used with permission

Clifton Cathedral – the building and community

A site was acquired central to the parish area and construction commenced in 1970 with the new Cathedral Church of Saints Peter and Paul being consecrated and opened on 29 June 1973. The total cost in 1973 was £800,000 for the site, the fees and construction. The Cathedral community became a leading exemplar of the renewed liturgy in terms of music and liturgical practice, with some well-known named musicians leading the music. In the intervening years church life evolves and many changes are taking place. Now Fifty Years on Clifton Cathedral still serves the wider community, and as the Clifton Diocesan Cathedral and a parish church. Yes, it is history in the making!

Peter J Harrison

The '*Clifton Cathedral – the building and people*' – a new book has been published marking the 50 Year Jubilee of the Consecration of the Cathedral Church of Saints Peter and Paul – Clifton, Bristol - and tells the full story with colour illustrations.

Available to purchase online:

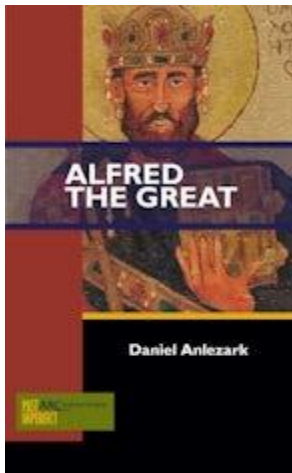
Publications | Clifton Diocese

<<https://cliftondiocese.com/diocese/publications/>>

Or from Clifton Cathedral House, Clifton Park, Bristol BS8 3BX phone 0117973 8411

Price £12.99 plus postage/packing 132pp

BOOK REVIEWS



Daniel Anlezark, *Alfred the Great*

(Kalamazoo & Bradford: ARC Humanities Press, 2017), xii + 103 pp., ISBN 9781942401285

Price £15.95

Alfred (born c. 849, died 899) reigned from 871 as king of Wessex, though his designation “the Great” is primarily due to Matthew Paris (d. 1259). Alfred is eclipsed in English society’s memory, largely because of new ways of school-teaching history.

But this book raises difficulties from the start. As Anlezark admits, he uses court sources such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Asser’s *Life of King Alfred*, though allowing for their pro-Alfred bias and diligently

seeking to compensate. While he respectably believes that there is enough evidence in favour of the authenticity of Asser's *Life* to warrant its acceptance, the work has also been questioned as a forgery from later in the Middle Ages. Moreover, William of Malmesbury's *History of the English Kings* (c. 1125) while using earlier sources, also uses much imagination, which has contributed to later legends about Alfred. Anlezark declares that even the famous episode of the burnt cakes, or loaves of bread, is not invalidated by being a legend but is instead a unit of "literary folklore", not history. While this view is tenable, it involves admitting that this story is a legend. Thus much available source material about Alfred is compromised, however hard Anlezark may work to evaluate it.

Nonetheless, Anlezark successfully covers three particularly important themes in Alfred's life: his faith, his promotion of learning and his wars against the Vikings. Alfred was pious, and surely considered his two early visits to Rome (in 853 and 855) as formative. As king, he went to Mass, and all the offices, every day and night, and imported monks to re-establish monasticism; he munificently supported the papacy. He commissioned Old English translations, including one of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*, primarily for his own benefit, and another of Gregory's *Regula Pastoralis*, a rule of life for bishops, to help reform the Wessex episcopate – believing that they would then reform the rest of the Church. Alfred's faith also informed his diplomacy, making his expansionist policy more peaceful by introducing a shared religion when the Viking king Guthrum accepted baptism, with Alfred as godfather, and when two sons of Hastein, a leading Viking, were baptized.

Turning to Alfred's work for culture: in the Preface to the *Regula Pastoralis* translation, he and/or one of his court remarked on "the current parlous state of the people", in Anlezark's phrase. Alfred recruited some of "the brightest minds available" from Europe to further his composite technological, ecclesiastical, legal and educational reform. He had his councillors approve the texts of his *Laws*, a work not by Alfred himself but clearly written under his supervision, appearing about 890. Alfred was also involved in compiling the *Anglo-*

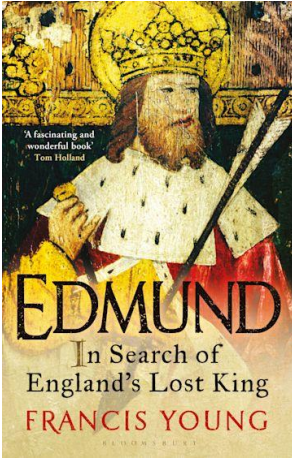
Saxon Chronicle, in which scholars connected with his court made local histories and other records into a single history. The *Chronicle* circulated more widely from the late tenth century in Latin after its Old English appearance about 892. However, in that year Alfred was distracted from further cultural work by renewed Viking warfare.

Politically, Wessex in 871 was exhausted. The Vikings, who invaded it that year, had the advantage against the English. Before Alfred's accession, he defeated them at the battle of Ashdown in January 871, only to be defeated at those of Basing and Merton soon after. His shrewd diplomacy, even if it involved bribery, temporarily prevented the Vikings from occupying Wessex; but from January 878 they overran it in their third and very successful invasion of his reign.

However, Alfred recovered his kingdom by defeating them in six months and, by 883, the ruler of west Mercia acknowledged Alfred as his lord. Then Alfred took London from the Vikings in 886; this meant that he extended his authority by including areas previously outside Wessex. The remaining Mercians put themselves under his lordship, helped by Alfred's wife Ealhswith's being the daughter of a Mercian ealdorman (earl). Also, Alfred developed a network of fortified towns in Wessex to safeguard the population.

This book lacks an index, but, since early medieval studies are, as Anlezark notes, "increasingly neglected in schools and universities", it is important.

Fr Nicholas Paxton



Francis Young, *Edmund: In Search of England's Lost King*

(Bloomsbury Academic 2021), 224 pp, 8 plates of coloured photographs

ISBN:PB: 978-1-3501-6525-0

Price £14.39

The Edmund (originally Eadmund; the letter **a** was usually dropped by the twelfth century) of the title is the king of the East Angles killed by the Danes on 20th November 869. The search in the sub-title for England's lost king is, in fact, two searches, a physical search for the location of his mortal remains and an historical search for the man behind the legend.

The introduction reviews the legend of Edmund (asserting that, had he not died as he did, he would no doubt be a footnote in Anglo-Saxon history), the status and influence of saints in the Middle Ages, the status of Edmund as the symbolic bearer of Englishness and the events of 1536 to 1540 (the dissolution of the monasteries) which led to the destruction of pilgrimage shrines. The author explains that Edmund became the force behind the Danes' conversion to Christianity, and later the first recognised patron saint of the English people. Edmund was venerated more widely and represented in art more frequently than any other English saint.

In order to set the scene, in time and place, Chapter 1 is a history of the kingdom of the Angles, in what is now East Anglia, from gradual settlement in the middle decades of the fifth century (the Romans had withdrawn in 410) to rule by a single dynasty by the beginning of the

seventh century. That dynasty was responsible for the adoption of Christianity by the Angles. At some point in the 850s Edmund became king of the Angles.

Chapter 2 is, in the absence of a reliable contemporary record, a thorough review of all that can be gleaned from two accounts written some 30 and 115 years later. An invading Danish army entered East Anglia from the west, through Mercia, and was confronted, unsuccessfully, by Edmund at Thetford.

The Danish leader Inguar offered Edmund the possibility of ruling under the overlordship of the Danes. Edmund refused, was stripped, tied to a tree, killed by many arrows and beheaded (the head thrown away so that the Angles could not find it and give the body a Christian burial; the head was found and buried with the body). The exact site of the execution cannot be established because of the difficulty of relating place names in Old English to place names on a modern map. Wherever first buried, the body was, possibly in 889, taken to a small church in Bury St Edmunds.

In 1095 it was translated solemnly to a new shrine in the great abbey at Bury St Edmunds, then being built after the Norman conquest. Apart from one move to London for safety in 1010 – 1013, the body was known to have been in the shrine at Bury St Edmunds until 1539.

Chapter 3, 4 & 5 discuss the development of a cult of St Edmund from the time of his death until 1066, the recognition of him as patron of all England after the Norman conquest and the way in which he has been regarded in England since the Reformation.

Before the arrival of the King's commissioners (to take the surrender of the abbey) in 1539, Edmund's coffin was removed from the shrine by the monks and buried. There is no record of the location of burial. The author has found an oral tradition, many years old, that the coffin was placed, before burial, in an iron chest. Such a heavy object could not

have been carried far. The likelihood, therefore, is that it was buried in the monks' cemetery outside the east end of the abbey.

At the time of writing (the book was published in 2018) the author was hopeful that a geophysical survey of the area would be carried out, in which case an iron chest, even if rusted away, would be detectable. Dr Francis Young will be the speaker for our Zoom talk on 13th May, so he may be able to tell us of any developments.

The overall impressions on reading this book are an appreciation of the detailed nature of the text and an amazement at the amount of research that must have gone into the preparation of that text. In a total of 496 footnotes the author gives the source of almost every fact, assertion and description in his text.

Bernard Polack

UPCOMING EVENTS

THURSDAY 25 APRIL 2024 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Dr John Jenkins: A National Repository of Saints: The relic collections of Westminster Cathedral 1895-1945.

MONDAY 13 MAY 2024 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Dr Francis Young: English Catholics and the Supernatural.

SATURDAY 25 MAY 2024 Visit to Holywell, North Wales.

TUESDAY 4 JUNE 2024 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Professor James Clark: *The Dissolution of the Monasteries*

THURSDAY 4 JULY 2024 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Fr Richard Finn OP: The History of the Dominican Order in England

THURSDAY 8 AUGUST 2024 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Professor Mark Stoye: The Prayer Book Rebellion of 1549

TUESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2024 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Scholastica Jacob: The Return of the Benedictine Sisters to England.

TUESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2024 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Elaine Joyce: Thomas Leveson, the Catholic Recusant Governor of Dudley Castle in the Civil War.

TUESDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2024 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Tim Guile: St Nicholas Owen, SJ

TUESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2024 7.30pm *Via Zoom*

Aimee Fleming: Margaret More Roper